Washington Post columnist calls for intervention of the “deep state”

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The media hysteria surrounding US President Donald Trump’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki has become the occasion for a radical shift to the right in the US ruling elite and media apparatus. Thinly-veiled calls for police state measures and the intervention of intelligence agencies into state affairs that would have been considered beyond the pale just a week ago, are now rife within the editorial pages of US newspapers.

On Friday, *Washington Post* columnist Eugene Robinson published a column entitled “God Bless the Deep State,” in which he presents the “public servants derided by Trumpists as the supposed ‘deep state’” as an antidote to a treasonous president and an ineffectual Congress.

Robinson never defines precisely what he means by the “deep state,” but he cites Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats as among those high-ranking officials who have countered Trump’s assertion that Russia did not “meddle” in the 2016 elections. It is to such intelligence and military officials that the *Post* columnist is appealing.

The “knowledgeable and experienced” professionals that make up the state and intelligence bureaucracy “are not participants in any kind of dark conspiracy,” he writes. Rather “they have spent years—often decades—mastering the details of foreign and domestic policy.”

“God bless them. With a supine Congress unwilling to play the role it is assigned by the Constitution, the deep state stands between us and the abyss.”

He concludes, “Democrats in Congress are powerless; the Republican leadership, spineless. Experienced government officials know that their job is to serve the president. But what if the president does not serve the best interests of the nation? In this emergency, the loyal and honorable deep state has a higher duty. It’s called patriotism.”

The term “deep state” has traditionally been reserved for countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey to denote the military/intelligence apparatus that has been the source of countless coups and attacks on fundamental democratic rights. Their “deep states” have presided over murder, torture, and the mass jailing of political opponents. But these countries are now, Robinson implies, to serve as a model for political rule in the United States.

Under other circumstances, Robinson’s article would read as a satire. Instead, it is a frightening testament to the types of reactionary attitudes prevalent within the ruling class critics of Trump. For this layers, Trump can do anything he wants on domestic policy—including a massive increase in military funding and his own efforts to increase the role of the military in domestic affairs. However, there is an overwhelming consensus in the military-intelligence apparatus, and its spokesmen in the media, that the anti-Russia policy must be maintained.

Dictatorship, war, domestic repression—all are being promoted in the furious, right-wing hysteria that is gripping the ruling elite.

Throughout the 20th century, those who have advocated dictatorial forms of rule have begun with Robinson’s premise: that elected government is “ineffectual,” and that unelected officials would do a better job defending the country from its enemies, foreign and domestic.

Robinson’s panegyric to the state intelligence bureaucracy is entirely outside of and alien to the American democratic tradition, which is notably distrustful not only of all concentrated power, but of unelected power in particular.

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Robinson's open embrace of the "deep state" is particularly ironic given that, until recently, newspapers aligned with the Democratic Party, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, denied that it even existed in the United States. Just four months ago, *Times* columnist Max Fisher wrote a column entitled "What Happens When You Fight a 'Deep State' That Doesn't Exist."

Fisher declared, "American institutions do not resemble the powerful deep states of countries like Egypt or Pakistan, experts say. Nor do individual leaks, a number of which have come from President Trump's own team, amount to a conspiracy. The diagnosis of a 'deep state,' those experts say, has the problem backward."

But now, Robinson, a Pulitzer prize winner and supporter of President Obama, has proclaimed to the readers of the *Post* that not only does this "deep state" exist, but that it should run the country.

Following the theft of the 2000 presidential election, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that there no longer exists a constituency for democracy in the American ruling elite, as growth of social inequality had made democratic forms increasingly impossible within the United States.

Eighteen years later, all of these processes have only intensified. Social inequality has risen to unprecedented levels, expressed most directly in the person of online retail oligarch Jeff Bezos, who owns the *Washington Post* and has a net worth of some $150 billion.

With the campaign launched in the wake of Trump's meeting with Putin in Helsinki, the charge that Trump has "betrayed" the United States to Russia is associated with the most flagrant demands for military rearmament against Russia and for a police-state build-up in the United States.

The declaration by the intelligence agencies that Russia "meddled" in the 2016 US election has been treated as gospel truth, and anyone who questions the record of the US intelligence agencies, despite their role in coups, sweeping attacks on democratic rights, and flagrant lies about "weapons of mass destruction" in the United States, has been branded a traitor.

The fact that such statements are being made in the American press is a warning of the direction in which the US government is headed. Whether or not sections of the US ruling elite, together with the state intelligence forces, move to oust or impeach Trump, this campaign portends a massive intensification of the policies, supported by both the Democrats and Republicans, of censorship, domestic repression, and militarism.

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